

The Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers (SBT) is a service of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) managed by the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) of the Policy and Mediation Division (PMD). It is a specialized resource that can be rapidly deployed on a temporary basis to provide technical advice to UN officials and a wide set of partners engaged in preventive diplomacy or mediation. The SBT's services are available to UN envoys, political and peacekeeping missions and country teams, as well as to regional organizations, Member States and other partners with whom the UN works closely in conflict mediation and good offices worldwide. SBT members can be deployed individually or in small groups, including with MSU staff.

The MSU is “an essential resource to support the good offices, mediation and facilitation work of the United Nations system and its partners. It seeks to get the right expertise to the right places at the right time, both by deploying personnel and providing remote analytical support.”

Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations and conflict prevention (S/2015/730 of 25 September 2015)

The principal operational role of the Standby Team is to provide expert advice to senior UN officials and partners upon request, either by deploying to the field or by providing advice remotely. This support is flexible and adapted to the needs of the situation. It can include providing technical expertise in a specific area; giving advice on procedural and agenda-setting issues; identifying entry points for dialogue and mediation; drafting options for the text of agreements; leading workshops for parties on substantive or process issues; and providing specialized mediation training and coaching.

SBT members are experienced in mediation situations and experts in a range of issues that arise frequently in peace negotiations, including the overall design and conduct of mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes (process design), security arrangements (ceasefires/DDR/SSR), constitutional issues, gender and inclusion, power-sharing issues, or climate change, environment and natural resources. When not deployed in the field, SBT members are on full-time standby, conducting research and comparative analysis of effective practices in their areas of expertise. Team members also support MSU in drafting operational guidance notes and related training materials.

Administration of the Standby Team

SBT support is provided in response to requests from UN officials and other partners at no cost to requesting entities; it is a resource fully funded from voluntary contributions to DPPA. All logistical, travel, administrative and management arrangements for the SBT are handled by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

For further information please contact the MSU Team Leader, Mr. Sean Kane, at kanes@un.org or the MSU Standby Team Coordinator, Mr. David Mueller, at david.mueller@un.org.

Composition of the 2025 Standby Team

ALEU GARANG (South Sudan – Process Design)

Mr. Garang served as the Head of IGAD Political Affairs and Peacebuilding (PAP) in 2024, IGAD Ambassador and Head of Mission to the Republic of South Sudan from 2020 to 2023, as well as the Director of the IGAD Mediation Support Unit since 2013. Mr. Garang has extensive experience in preventive diplomacy and mediation. He supported IGAD-led mediation processes in South Sudan from 2014 to 2018 and provided technical assistance to the South Sudan-led mediation on the conflict in Sudan from 2018 to 2020. From 2002 to 2013, Mr. Garang held several legal positions: He served as Senior Legal Counsel and Policy Advisor to various public institutions, including Ministries, Commissions, Universities, and international negotiation teams. Mr. Garang holds an LLB in Law from Cairo University, an LLM in Law and a PhD in Public International Law from Alzaiem Alazhari University. He also completed an MA in Peace and Security Studies from Addis Ababa University and a Diploma in Peace and Security in Africa (PASA) from Uppsala University. Mr. Garang is fluent in Arabic and English.

CHRISTINA SHAHEEN (USA – Gender & Inclusion)

has extensive experience in mediation and negotiation, with a focus on Women, Peace and Security and ensuring women's meaningful participation in Track I processes. She has advised on mediation and dialogue processes related to Afghanistan, Israel/Palestine, Sudan and Syria, and has broader experience in supporting multi-track engagement of youth and civil society in the MENA region. As Senior Gender Advisor to the SRSB for Sudan, she led the design and establishment of a negotiating delegation of Sudanese women's rights leaders, and the inclusion of gender observers in negotiations between the Sudanese government and SPLM-North ElHilu armed movement. Previously, as Gender Advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Syria, she supported the direct participation of Syrian women in the Constitutional Committee and through the creation of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board. Christina speaks English.

FLORENCE MPAAYEI (Kenya – Gender & Inclusion) has, while on the SBT, provided advice on gender and inclusion in Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Zambia. In South Sudan, she supported UNMISS in strengthening the mediation capacity of religious leaders and mentored young women mediators in the Horn of Africa sub-region. In Lesotho, she supported a national prevention initiative aimed at fostering political stability and social integration. Florence has long-standing experience in designing initiatives to support women's participation in high-level mediation efforts including in the Great Lakes, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan under the auspices of, inter alia, the AU, IGAD, EAC and UN Women. Florence has been a member of FEMWISE-Africa and the Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth. Prior to joining the SBT, she was a Senior Advisor on Peace Practice and a Visiting Lecturer at the Hekima University College/Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations. Florence speaks English.

ISSAKA SOUARÉ (Guinea – Process Design) has, in the past four years, served as an independent senior governance and mediation advisor. He worked on the operationalisation of the Africa Facility to Support Inclusive Transitions (AFSIT), and advised, from mid-2022 to early 2023, the Trilateral Mechanism composed of the UN, AU and IGAD in their facilitation efforts of dialogue between Sudanese actors in Khartoum. He also facilitated training workshops in mediation for religious leaders in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2024 and helped them develop a mediation strategy for the region. During an earlier tenure on the SBT from 2016 to 2020 Issaka was deployed to provide operational advice to the SG's Personal Envoy on Western Sahara and UN representatives and RCs as well as representatives of the AU in several countries, including the Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, DRC, Haiti, Malawi, São Tomé and Príncipe, Togo and Zambia. Prior to joining the SBT, from 2013 to 2016, he served as Special Adviser to the AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel and was extensively involved in the Mali peace processes and its follow-up. Mr. Souaré also served as advisor with the AU High-Level Panel on Egypt in 2013 to 2014. He speaks Arabic, English and French.

JUAN GARRIGUES (Spain – Process Design) has, while on the SBT, provided mediation support in Libya, Guatemala and Haiti, amongst others. He was previously the Deputy Director of the Dialogue Advisory Group (DAG), where he facilitated political dialogues in different contexts of armed conflict and political transition. In the Basque Country, he was part of the International Verification Commission which participated in the disarmament of ETA after almost 60 years of armed violence. From 2008 to 2011, he served as a foreign policy advisor in the Spanish Prime Minister's office. In the UN, he has worked in the Americas Division of the (then)

Department of Political Affairs and served as a UN Volunteer in Niger. He has also served as a short and long-term election observer with the EU, OSCE and UN. He speaks English, Spanish and French.

JUANITA MILLÁN HERNANDEZ (Colombia – Security Arrangements) has, while on the SBT, supported the peace efforts in Sudan, provided expertise in support of the Libyan-led ceasefire monitoring mechanism, and offered technical support in diverse contexts on inclusive security arrangements. She has also co-led the design and delivery of DPPA's Women in Ceasefire online course. Prior to joining the SBT, she served as Adviser to the High Commissioner for Peace of Colombia during the Havana Peace Talks. In 2014, she was appointed to the Sub-Commission on Ending the Conflict, a technical working group responsible for designing the ceasefire and disarmament process. The same year, she assumed a position on the Sub-Commission on Gender, advising on the gender sensitivity of the agreement's provisions. After the signing of the 2016 peace accords with the FARC, Juanita was part of the Tri-Partite Ceasefire Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, focusing on gender sensitivity, security guarantees, and the reintegration of FARC combatants. She also advised the Colombian Government on potential configurations for talks with the ELN. Ms. Millán speaks English and Spanish.

RICHARD SMITH (South Africa – Process Design) has, while on the SBT, supported senior UN officials in Chile, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, and across multiple contexts in Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific. Mr. Smith has expertise in gender-sensitive conflict analysis, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, multi-track peace processes, electoral support, climate, peace and security and interreligious dialogue. He has extensive experience in inclusive mediation process design and the facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogue processes, including in the Middle East and South-East Asia. Mr. Smith has also been a rostered member of the African Standby Force, and supported SADC, the ECOWAS Commission and AU Peace Support Operations in strengthening the peace support capabilities of AU Regional Mechanisms. He is co-author of the book *Working With Conflict, Skills and Strategies for Action*. Richard speaks English and basic French.

